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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 14, 2016

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New Initiative Encourages Installation of Active Radon Systems in New Homes

Radon leading cause of lung cancer for non-smokers

SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) and the American Lung Association in Illinois (ALAIL) today announced the statewide launch of an initiative to encourage home builders to install activated radon mitigation systems in new homes. The systems reduce levels of radon, a radioactive gas that is the leading cause of lung cancer in non-smokers and the second-leading cause of lung cancer overall.

Today's announcement of the Radon Excellence Program coincides with national Radon Action Month in January.

"Home builders in Illinois currently are required to install passive radon mitigation systems in all new construction," said IEMA Director James K. Joseph. "This program encourages builders to provide even more protection for their home buyers by activating those systems. It's an easy, yet very important step they can take to help families avoid the serious health risk associated with radon."

Radon is a colorless, odorless, tasteless gas that comes from the radioactive decay of naturally occurring uranium in the soil. It is the leading cause of lung cancer in non-smokers and the second leading cause of lung cancer overall.

Elevated levels of the radioactive gas have been found in all 102 Illinois counties. IEMA estimates nearly 1,200 Illinois citizens die from radon-related lung cancer each year.

IEMA and ALAIL launched a pilot of the program last year in Savoy with two Champaign builders, Signature Homes and Ironwood Homes who partnered with radon mitigation contractor David Smith Radon Remedies of Heyworth on the project. More than 100 new homes were built as part of the pilot program.

“Radon-induced lung cancer is responsible for the deaths of nearly 1,200 Illinoisans each year and is the leading cause of lung cancer for non-smokers,” said IDPH Director Nirav D. Shah, M.D., J.D. “Given that nearly 40 percent of all homes tested in Illinois have radon levels in excess of recommended guidelines, we strongly encourage homeowners to test their homes for radon. There is no safe level for radon, but IDPH and IEMA recommend fixing homes that have levels at or above 4pCi/L.”

For more information about the Radon Excellence Program, visit the ALAIL website at <http://www.healthhouse.org>. Additional information about radon, including lists of licensed radon measurement and mitigation contractors, is available on IEMA’s radon webpage at www.radon.illinois.gov.